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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Can Do ---

WHEN NATURAL DISASTER STRIKES

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

WHEN NATURAL DISASTER STRIKES



Tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, and many other natural disasters may strike without warning. It is important for you to know how and where to get emergency help. This leaflet explains how the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help you.

The Department can:

- Provide food to victims of natural disaster from stocks already available in the States.
- Provide livestock feed to farmers whose crops have been destroyed or damaged, or whose livestock have been left without feed.
- Provide housing loans to farmers and homeowners in towns of up to 10,000 population to repair or replace homes, farm buildings, and related facilities.
- Extend emergency loans to help farmers meet expenses essential to continue normal farm or ranch operations.
- Share costs to restore and conserve disaster-stricken land and water resources.
- Battle forest fires and take other emergency actions in the national forests and adjoining areas.
- Make payments for losses on federally insured crops.

Assistance operations can be started in an area when the President makes a major disaster declaration, when the Secretary of Agriculture finds the area in a state of emergency, or when the director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness determines that a major disaster is likely.

USDA field personnel gather information on the extent of damage and kind of assistance needed and relay the information to Washington.

USDA Help in Case of SEVERE STORMS, FLOODS, OR EARTHQUAKES

When hurricanes, tornadoes, and hailstorms strike, or floods overrun the land, the Department can:

- Provide USDA donated foods to disaster relief agencies for emergency mass feeding of disaster victims; arrange through local authorities for food donations or issuance of food stamps for families.
- Make loans to eligible disaster-stricken farmers for operating expenses, replacing lost or destroyed livestock, and repairing or replacing damaged or destroyed buildings and farm equipment. Loans for home repair and replacement are also available for rural residents and homeowners in towns up to 10,000 population.
- Sell Government-owned feed grain at reduced prices to eligible livestockmen.
- Permit grazing or haying on land otherwise set aside from crop production under Department programs.
- Approve emergency cost sharing for removing debris to rehabilitate farmland.
- Give practical advice on necessary repairs and on cleaning up after storm damage.
- Make emergency loans and provide other assistance to REA cooperatives for repair and replacement of damaged rural electric or telephone facilities.
- Make indemnity payments on federally insured crops damaged or destroyed by storms.
- Give assistance after floods in planning and carrying out measures for land rehabilitation, flood prevention, erosion control, and drainage.

DROUGHT

As drought conditions develop or worsen, the Department can:

- Sell feed grains to eligible farmers at reduced prices:

- Grant permission to harvest hay or graze cattle on land set aside under Department programs.
- Share costs for restoring pastures, installing livestock water facilities, and carrying out tillage operations to prevent serious wind erosion.
- Make emergency loans to eligible farmers.
- Make payments on insured crops.
- Request ICC to authorize reduced railroad freight rates for moving hay or feed into an area or livestock to other areas.
- Provide technical assistance in conserving existing water and forage supplies, and in taking action to keep soil from blowing away during high winds.
- Through local welfare agencies, provide donated food or food stamps to eligible families.

RURAL FIRES

The Forest Service provides fire protection in national forests, and assists in control of fires that threaten to spread from nearby lands onto national forests. Financial and technical assistance is provided to States for fire protection on other lands.

When a Governor requests that OEP finance unusual fire control costs, the Forest Service may act as advisor to the Office of Emergency Preparedness in determining eligibility.

After a fire, USDA Agencies can assist with flood control on burned areas.

PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION OF DISASTER

State and local agencies have primary responsibility for disaster relief. They are expected to use their own resources, facilities, and funds to maximum extent possible to meet disaster costs. When assistance is necessary to supplement the capabilities of State and local government, the President can declare that a major disaster is imminent or has occurred, and he can finance operations from emergency funds provided for this purpose.

After a Presidential declaration of a major disaster or a threat of a major disaster, the following additional types of USDA help may be provided:

- Local welfare agencies may be authorized to provide food stamps without cost to disaster victims.
- Cancellation of up to \$2,500 may be authorized on certain FHA loans made to finance replacement of disaster losses.
- Donation, following Presidential declaration, of Government-owned feed grain and hay purchased with OEP funds for starving livestock.
- USDA may administer OEP financed programs such as for debris removal or financing part of freight costs on livestock feed.

STEPS YOU TAKE TO GET USDA HELP

Food for Mass Feeding. USDA donated foods in school storerooms, in local family distribution depots, and in county- or State-controlled warehouses may be released for use in mass feeding operations by public or private disaster relief agencies. Contact those in charge of the local storage facility.

Food for the Home. In areas where the direct food donation program regularly serves needy families, the local officials in charge may make a special distribution to those affected by disasters. Contact your local welfare agencies.

In Food Stamp Areas. USDA donated foods may be distributed to families for home use upon a determination by Food and Nutrition Service that it is not possible to purchase food because of the interruption of services or destruction of commercial food facilities. If commercial food channels are operating, FNS may declare an area affected by either a natural or man-caused disaster eligible for emergency free food stamp issuance to households in need of temporary food assistance. Stamps are distributed through the normal outlets in the county. Contact your local welfare agencies.

Credit. For Farmers Home Administration low-interest emergency farm loans and housing loans, contact your nearest FHA field office to determine if you are eligible. It is usually located in the county seat. If not, any USDA local office can direct you to the proper location.

Livestock Feed and Emergency Conservation Measures. To obtain livestock feed assistance or cost sharing on emergency conservation costs to rehabilitate damaged farmland, contact your local ASCS office. It is usually located in the county seat.

Technical Assistance. The Soil Conservation Service can give technical help for land rehabilitation or development of flood prevention projects. In emergencies due to floods, its engineers can supervise prevention and rehabilitation measures. To obtain this help, contact your local Soil Conservation district, SCS work unit area, or SCS State office.

Forest Disasters. The Forest Service can help suppress fires; conduct rescue operations; prevent and/or remove avalanche debris; assist in flood, hurricane, and earthquake emergencies; mobilize its communications system for rapid action; and take other actions in or near national forests or elsewhere as directed by the President. To obtain this help, contact your nearest district ranger.

Disease and Insects. The Agricultural Research Service has veterinarians, plant pathologists, and entomologists skilled at crop and livestock protection. ARS, in cooperation with State and local governments, may share the cost of control of certain plant pests that threaten to cause damage of disaster proportions. In case of a disaster of these types, contact your practicing veterinarian, State or Federal veterinarian, or county extension agent.

Federal Crop Insurance. To purchase such insurance, contact your nearest FCIC representative or the Crop Insurance State Director for your State. Any USDA local office can direct you to the proper location.

Information. The Extension Service can advise on cleaning up damaged property, on sanitary measures, on water supply and sewage disposal, insect infestation, feed and water for livestock, substitute planting for damaged crops, grain storage, and other disaster problems. To obtain this help, contact your county agricultural agent, or the director of extension at the State land-grant university or college in your area.

EXAMPLES OF HELP GIVEN

On February 21, 1971, scores of tornadoes tore through 23 Mississippi Delta counties killing 103 people and causing an estimated \$15,000,000 in property damage. Total losses included some 900 homes and 150 mobile homes destroyed or suffering major damage, 500 homes receiving lesser damage, 150 farm buildings destroyed, 100 small businesses destroyed, and 1,800 families suffering major losses. Through its various agencies, USDA provided families some 65,000 pounds of donated foods, free food stamps valued at \$256,934, cost-sharing assistance for debris clearance and fence repair totalling \$415,000, and hundreds of housing and farm loans totalling several hundred thousand dollars.

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In 1971, a prolonged drought settled over the Southwest. In counties where the drought was especially severe, a double-headed program was instituted. In addition to livestock feed at reduced prices in counties designated by the Secretary, a hay transportation assistance program was authorized in the same counties under a Presidential declaration of threat of major disaster. This combination of programs permitted farmers or ranchers who were eligible to obtain livestock feed grain to substitute the nutritional equivalent in hay. They could then buy the hay in the open market and be reimbursed from the President's emergency funds for two-thirds of the cost of transporting the hay, not to exceed \$20 a ton.

Under REAP emergency cost sharing, over \$13 million was provided to develop livestock water facilities and carry out tillage operations to prevent serious erosion.

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In August 1969, record rainfall from Hurricane Camille flooded some of Virginia's more productive farmlands. By December, \$2,500,000 had been allocated in 16 counties to help farmers restore land to productivity. Because REAP emergency conservation help was available as soon as waters subsided, many farmers got 1970 crops in on flood-damaged lands.

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In the fall of 1970, southern California was ravaged by the most disastrous forest and brush fire in the region's history. About one half million acres were burned, more than 500 homes and related structures were lost, and there were 13 fire-related deaths. After the fire, some 1,000 homes were exposed to the dangers of floods and mud slides from the damaged watersheds. An immediate rehabilitation program by the Forest Service reseeded the burned area with fast-growing cover crops, repaired and cleared 210 miles of roads and 75 miles of major stream channels, and constructed 11 check dams and debris basins. This work was completed before the spring rains and averted a major flood in the already hard hit Los Angeles basin.

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In 1971, the extensive freeze damage to citrus resulted in millions of dollars of loss to growers in Arizona, California, and Florida. Cotton growers from California and Texas east to South Carolina suffered their fifth consecutive year of crop losses in 1970. Federal Crop Insurance payments to insured growers helped them continue as financially sound agribusinessmen.